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November 2, 2009

Virginia State Rail Plan

The Virginia Statewide Rail Plan (VSRP) is a comprehensive long range planning document that addresses the commonwealth's transportation goals through VTRANS2035 as well as Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations for state rail plans identified in 49 CFR 26615. The VSRP has been developed through an extensive process involving federal and state agencies, key stakeholders and the public. This document is the culmination of multiple documents developed during the planning and public involvement process:

- *Statewide Rail Plan – Summary Report*, which serves as the executive summary of the VSRP and presents the vision, goals and policy recommendations to meet the Commonwealth's freight, intermodal shipments, passenger rail (commuter, intercity and high speed services) needs through 2035 in a format accessible to the Citizens of the Commonwealth. The Summary Report was developed from the technical data developed and contained within this document and the other documents described below.
- The *2008 Statewide Rail Resource Action Plan, December 15, 2008* was prepared to meet the requirements in legislation from the Virginia General Assembly which recommended project priorities for rail improvements.
- The *Statewide Shortline Railroad Improvement Plan - Technical Memorandum* November 2, 2009 prepared to describe the activities funded by Virginia through the Rail Preservation Program.

About This Report

This Technical Report is the synthesis of the above reports and presents more technical and detailed information about the existing system and future needs of Virginia's Rail system, how rail is a vital component of the Commonwealth's overall multi-modal transportation system, major transportation corridors and rail improvements for those corridors and provides strategic recommendations to meet those needs. A brief summary of each chapter is provided below:

- Chapter 1 provides an introduction and discusses the purpose of the VSRP,
- Chapter 2 discusses DRPT mandates and strategic transportation goals of the Commonwealth, and specific goals for rail transportation.
- Chapter 3 provides the national, regional, and statewide context for the Rail Plan and how Virginia interfaces with national transportation corridors and networks; how rail interfaces with highway, port and aviation modes; land use, natural resources and environmental influences; and interface with the VTrans 2035 transportation planning efforts.
- Chapter 4 provides a brief history of rail development in the United States, particularly passenger services being provided by Amtrak and the Virginia Railway Express.
- Chapter 5 provides an overview of the Virginia rail system and tonnage carried, including the Class I railroads (Norfolk Southern and CSX), the Commonwealth's shortline system consisting of 10 railroads. The chapter also provides an overview of

- the intercity passenger rail service routes by Amtrak and commuter rail services by VRE, including ridership data and on-time performance information.
- Chapter 6 discusses national and Virginia growth trends for population, freight, and rail system congestion. It discusses the trends in passenger rail travel, high speed rail, economic development based on rail services, and the trends in two major Virginia freight commodities – coal and containerized cargo.
 - Chapter 7 provides an understanding of private railroads, federal exemption laws, and the need for effective public-private partnerships to address rail issues.
 - Chapter 8 provides a summary of current funding programs and historic funding commitments to meet Virginia rail policy goals and needs. It also contains a discussion of the benefit cost analysis methodology developed by DRPT to evaluate the public benefits of potential rail improvement projects.
 - Chapter 9 discusses major project accomplishments since the previous rail plan, both legislative and rail improvement projects that have been constructed.
 - Chapter 10 discusses rail abandonments, railroad consolidations, safety, highway-rail grade crossings, and the Commonwealth's rails-to-trails program.
 - Chapter 11 discusses the unconstrained rail improvement needs for the principal Class I freight railroads, commuter and intercity passenger rail operators and services, and the Ports of Virginia. It also
 - provides a rail program revenue outlook and potential funding sources, including a recommended resource allocation plan for rail improvement projects based on revenue projections, and the methodology used to prioritize projects for consideration by the Commonwealth.
 - Chapter 12 discusses the unconstrained rail improvement needs for the shortline freight railroads,
 - Chapter 13 concludes the technical report and contains discusses future rail plan updates by the Commonwealth and annual reports required by the Federal Railroad Administration.
 - Chapter 14 provides a list of sources utilized in the development of the Statewide Rail Plan.

Following Chapter 14.0, the VSRP contains three appendices. Appendix A contains a discussion of abandoned railroads and the Commonwealth's rails-to-trails program. Appendix B contains a summary of previous and current studies concerning rail transportation and multimodal solutions for multi-state corridors such as I-95 and I-81, as well as proposed high speed rail projects. Appendix C contains an assessment of shortline railroad needs and estimated costs for rail improvements.

VTrans2035 Process

VTrans2035, the Commonwealth's statewide long-range multimodal transportation plan, is being updated by the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment with the support of the five state transportation modal agencies: Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Department of Aviation; Department of Transportation, Department of Motor Vehicles and

the Virginia Port Authority. The Statewide Rail Plan will be a key input into the VTrans2035 update.

VTrans2035 is being updated in conjunction with key stakeholders across the Commonwealth. This coordinated effort will ensure a well-balanced plan that evaluates pressing transportation issues across the entire state and across all modes. VTrans2035 will build upon the accomplishments of VTrans2025, the current statewide long-range multimodal transportation plan completed in 2004. The VTrans2035 update will:

- Validate the vision and goals set forth in VTrans2025
- Conduct an inventory of the existing transportation system, across all modes
- Examine socioeconomic and demographic trends
- Explore the long-term viability of the motor fuels tax
- Explore through a series of issue papers pressing transportation policy and topics such as safety, system preservation, freight mobility, accessibility/connectivity, land use, regionalism, economic development, technology, congestion and environment
- Determine the economic impact of transportation investments
- Examine the adequacy of transportation funding
- Look closely at the characteristics and deficiencies of corridors of statewide significance
- Identify strategies to improve movement through and between the corridors using modal plans to select the best strategies
- Integrate agency modal plans into a comprehensive and cohesive Statewide Plan
- Include extensive public and stakeholder involvement

VTrans 2035 will incorporate surface transportation (highway, transit and travel demand management), rail, port and aviation plans. As one of the modal plans that will be incorporated into VTrans 2035 this VSRP addresses the goals as indicated utilizing the state transportation planning process. The VSRP was developed based on the significant statewide multimodal transportation corridors and provides the Commonwealth with a balanced modal approach to the movement of people and goods. This plan recommends the best rail infrastructure investments utilizing a clearly defined process that takes into account cost, funding sources, safety, congestion and the environment.

Federal Rail Administration (FRA) – State Rail Plan Requirements

The FRA requirements for State Rail Plans are contained in 49 CFR § 266.15.

49 CFR § 266.15(a) requires that ‘The State Rail Plans shall be based on a comprehensive, coordinated and continuing planning process for all transportation services within the State and shall be developed with an opportunity for participation by persons interested in rail activity in the State and adjacent States where appropriate.’ The VTrans2035 process detailed above meets the requirements of this section

49 CFR § 266.15(b) requires that ‘Each item submitted in response to a federal requirement shall reference that requirement by subsection, paragraph, and subparagraph in the rail plan report.’ To meet this requirement the Virginia State Rail Plan has included a cross reference between the requirements of 49 CFR § 266.15 and their location within the VSRP. Additionally, each chapter will cite the applicable requirements that are addressed in that chapter.

49 CFR § 266.15(c)(10), 49 CFR § 266.15(c)(11), 49 CFR § 266.15(c)(11A) require data on the overall planning process. The VSRP is prepared using the VTrans2035 process as referenced in the preceding discussion and therefore meets both state and federal planning objectives.